

## THE COPYRIGHT AGITATION.

HOW THE DEATH OF SIR JOHN THOMPSON WILL AFFECT IT SOME MISTAKES RECTIFIED THE AGITATION AS VIEWED BY MONTREAL.



HOW the lamentably sudden death of the able and beloved Premier of this country Sir John Thompson will affect the copyright agitation, it is probably too early to determine. The day before his death he had talked with Lord Ripon in the Colonial Office on this subject. What he said, what impressions he made, what points he gained, what promises he received and what he learned can be known only to his private secretary and Sir Charles Tupper perhaps not even to them. If these points are not known, and should Lord Ripon not disclose them, Canada will have lost a great deal on this point.

However, until the matter is thoroughly intelligible, further comment would be out of place, and those interested in this matter of copyright, of whom Sir John Thompson was the champion, may console themselves with the hope that Sir John's interview with the Colonial Secretary will be fruitful in result.

Mr. John Ross Robertson, the President of the Copyright Association, was interviewed on this point, and said: "I am afraid that the death of Sir John Thompson will materially retard the copyright negotiations. Outside of members of our association who are thoroughly versed in the copyright discussion, no other man had such a thorough grasp of the situation. The result of his communications with Lord Ripon may be made known presently, but I doubt very much whether any thing definite had been settled. Sir John had arranged to meet the correspondent of The Toronto Evening Telegram at 5.30 on Friday afternoon. His death, of course, cancelled the interview. While I hope that some member of the new Cabinet may take hold of copyright matters, I am afraid that in the turmoil of politics the interests of the printers and publishers will suffer. I should think that the Hon. George Foster might possibly be the best man to handle the matter, but nothing, I fancy, can be said at present. The want of our own Copyright Act means a loss to the printing trade in this city of nearly fifty thousand dollars per year in wages, not including the amount which would be expended in paper, press work and binding."

## A CHANGE OF BASE.

The position at the time of Sir John's interview is well put in a London despatch of December 11th.

"Advantage has been taken of Sir John Thompson's presence in this country to revive the agitation upon the part of authors and publishers against the Canadian Copyright Bill of 1889. An important deputation recently waited upon Lord Ripon, and it is significant that there was a tendency to recede from the position hitherto taken up by those interested in the matter.

"Sir Albert Rollitt stated that there was no feeling of hostility towards Canada on the part of the deputation, and that Canada had the right of legislation on those points which concerned her own printers and publishers.

"It was largely the details of the recent legislation that were

criticised very strongly, but, after all, that is a detail which it may, perhaps, be possible to overcome by further discussion.

"The Marquis of Ripon made one statement which has given rise to much concern on the part of those who waited upon him, for he said that his departmental sympathies were naturally in the question with those colonies which he specially represented. This has roused the ire of Mr. Arnold Foster, who has written to The Times on the subject in rather an impulsive and aggressive sort of way, but his views are not likely to be accepted generally by the public at large. The Marquis of Ripon stated that he proposed to discuss the matter fully with Sir John Thompson while he is here, and it may be taken for granted, therefore, that in view of the manner in which the Premier is supported in Canada a decided step is likely to be taken in the settlement of this vexed question."

## CANADA STANDS FIRM.

Canada has definitely decided that it is going to have its own Copyright Act, and going to have it right soon. Every leading newspaper in the country has taken up the matter, and the arguments for its enforcement are as various as they are numerous. Some arguments are calm and majestic, others are products of minds which believe the time for that is past.

The Toronto Daily Mail of December 6th has an excellent article showing that copyright is analagous to patent. Canada issues Canadian patents, and hence should issue Canadian copyrights. It says: "Were the suspended Copyright Act a freebooting measure this allegation (that Canada wished to appropriate the product of British brains) might hold good. But, as a matter of fact, the law guards the right of British authors, in that it gives them a Canadian copyright on conditions similar to those laid down in the much applauded Act of the United States, namely, that the works shall be printed and published here. Further, our Act surpasses the United States Act in liberality, in that it does not permit the re-printing of a non-copyrighted work, save upon registration and the payment to the author of a royalty of 10 per cent of the retail price of the books reproduced. The assertion that the law looks to piracy is therefore unfounded."

## "PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY" ERRS.

That estimable New York book-paper, The Publishers Weekly, makes one or two little errors in its very fair article on Canadian copyright.

It says: "The most offensive clause in that Act (1889) provides that a British author may secure copyright in Canada by reprinting his book within thirty days of its English publication; failing to do this, any Canadian may reprint the book on condition of paying 'a royalty of 10 per cent. on the retail price of each copy or reproduction.' No adequate provision for the collection of the royalty is made, and the effect of the Act would be to render English copyright in Canada doubtful and precarious."

This is misleading. The book must be registered before or simultaneously with its publication elsewhere, and reprinted within thirty days. But this reprinting does not include the